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SUBJECT: A GHANAIAN ANALYST'S VIEW OF THE TOGO CRISIS

Classified By: POLCHIEF SCOTT TICKNOR FOR REASONS 1.5 D AND E.

¶1. (C) Summary: James Gbeho, one of Ghana's most prominent foreign policy analysts and a former Foreign Minister, recently presented a paper in Accra on the Togo crisis. He was cynical about the motives of Faure Gnassingbe and the Togolese military. He saw the possibility of civil war, with significant implications for Ghana and the region. He privately told Pol FSN that Nigeria had threatened Gnassingbe with military force. End summary.

¶2. (U) In a February 24 public presentation in Accra, Ambassador James Victor Gbeho, one of Ghana's leading foreign policy analysts, a retired senior diplomat and Foreign Minister under former President J.J. Rawlings, offered a crisp analysis of the situation in Togo. He described Faure Gnassingbe and his government as "past masters at deception and prevarication who will play for time while they dig in and contrive illegal moves to perpetuate their authoritarian, corrupt and illegal seizure of power." He offered the following analysis:

Origins of the crisis: The crisis stems primarily from the Togolese military's desire for self-preservation and perpetuation of benefits enjoyed during 38 years of Eyadema. The predominantly northern, ethnically Kabiye Togolese army is afraid that giving up power will expose them to revenge and endanger their personal safety and misbegotten wealth. When they took power, Gnassingbe and the military acted according to a prearranged game plan.

Implications for Togo: Any outbreak of violence would set Togo on a path of civil war. Neighboring countries considering invading Togo to oust the Gnassingbe junta should think again, given the potential for spurring more broad based violence. Togo could split along north-south lines. Civil war would make Togo a magnet for illegal arms smuggling in the region.

Implications for Ghana: Because Ghana and Togo share almost all major tribes, instability in Togo could spur ethnic violence in Ghana. Ghana-Togo relations, currently the best in four decades, would be strained. Ghana's eastern border would be destabilized by movements of fighters, flows of illegal arms, and refugees. Ghana could not support a meaningful refugee program by itself and would need assistance. Civil war would also destroy Ghana's overland trade to Benin and Nigeria and disrupt cross-border economic activity.

Implications for the Region: A destabilized Togo would damage the economies of West Africa. Traders from Ghana and Benin have already slowed down commercial activities as they keep a watch on the Togo crisis. Conflict in Togo would attract some of the hundreds of young mercenaries in the region, including child soldiers. The Togo situation could embolden militaries in other regional countries, most notably in Guinea. ECOWAS has done admirable work in responding to the Togo crisis, but failure in Togo would likely spell doom for the organization.

Solutions: An imperfect solution is preferable to full blown civil war. The current, biased constitution is not a good document from which to build democracy in Togo and needs to be revised. The Electoral Commission and National Assembly are partisan and need reforming. Elections should not be held for six months or a year, allowing time to amend capricious laws, create a new voter register, and prepare for the elections. Togolese should be prepared to indemnify perpetrators of abuses in the interest of peace and national unity.

Comment

¶3. (C) Some other private think tank analysts here share the suspicions that Gnassingbe and the Togolese military are insincere and trying their best to buy time. They concur that an ethnic conflict in Togo could fuel a flow of illegal arms and mercenaries in the region. While Gbeho's presentation was before elections were called in Togo and Gnassingbe resigned, much of his analysis is still relevant as the perspective of an influential private Ghanaian analyst with excellent access in the GOG and academia. Ambassador Gbeho told Pol FSN privately that ECOWAS Chairman Chambas (a former colleague) informed him that Obasanjo had threatened Gnassingbe with a Nigerian military invasion if he did not

bend to ECOWAS demands. He also confirmed information which Pol FSN has heard from other sources that the Ghanaian Embassy in Togo is heavily staffed by Ghanaian intelligence officers.

YATES